

A Glorious Centenary

PIERRE HENRI GROLIER, O.M.I.

by **Charles Choque, O.M.I.**

One hundred years ago, on June 4, 1864, Father Pierre-Henri GROLIER, O.M.I., breathed his last at Good-Hope. He was only 38 years old; however, during his 12 years of missionary work, so great were his achievements that his bishop attributed to his zeal the expansion of the Mackenzie Missions. From the founder of the Oblates, Bishop de Mazenod, who had conferred on him the sacred character of the Holy Priesthood, he had inherited this devouring fire which seeks to win all souls to Christ even at the cost of one's own life.

In order to follow step by step the saga of Father Duchaussois, O.M.I., or the more recent work of Father P. E. Breton, O.M.I., entitled « Au pays des Peaux-de-Lièvres » or one of the latest books of Father Aimé ROCHE, O.M.I., « Le secret des Igloos ». All of them show us Father Grolier unsparing of himself, ready to make every sacrifice in order to save souls. Physical suffering does not deter him but he cannot bear the torturing knowledge that souls may be in peril.

Father Grolier would like to outdistance everywhere the Protestant minister whom he is far from charitably considering as a « separated brother ». At that time, the oecumenical spirit was non-existent in the Far North or hardly so. Unfortunately, it must be said that, even nowadays, some Anglican

ministers are still following in Father Grollier's footsteps instead of bending a willing ear to those appeals for mutual understand in which echo around the world. In the evening of Good Friday, have I not heard with my own ears, an ordained Anglican minister evoke the memories of the Inquisition in order to turn the Eskimos away from the Catholic Church? Had Christ not been crucified, sorrow would have killed Him who sacrificed His life that « all may be one ». However, let us come back to Father Grollier and attend his first meeting with the Loucheux and the Eskimos at Fort MacPherson. Let us read again his narration of this triumphant scene:

« On the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14, 1860), after gathering the Loucheux and the Eskimos round this sign of reconciliation, I invited the two chiefs to come nearer. I asked them to join hands at the foot of the Cross; I made them kiss it as a token of alliance and of peace between them in the sight of God. My hands pressing theirs at the foot of the crucifix, I made them promise to help each other in the future... I gave the Eskimo chief a picture of Christ on the cross... and to the Loucheux chief a picture of Our Saviour's Mother... It is on this beautiful day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross that the great Eskimo nation offered its first fruits to the Church; several of them became children of God as they received the Holy Sacrament of Baptism ».

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